

2014-2015

West Des Moines Teen Center Registrant Handbook



The West Des Moines Teen Center was established in 2006 to provide an opportunity for West Des Moines junior high students to engage in positive, age-appropriate activities in a safe, recreational environment. Housed in the former Rex Mathes Elementary School, the Teen Center operates as a result of an agreement between the City of West Des Moines (WDM) and the West Des Moines Community School District (WDMCSD.) The facility itself is owned and operated by the WDMCSD. The West Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department provides the staffing and programming for the West Des Moines Teen Center.



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Introduction to the Teen Center

Established in 2006, the West Des Moines Teen Center provides after school programming for junior high students in the West Des Moines Community School District (WDMCSD.) Summer programming is open to students throughout the Des Moines Metro area. The Teen Center's enduring mission is to create an environment in which children can experience a healthy transition into young adulthood. By fostering positive, ongoing interactions and respectful relationships, the Teen Center creates a community where having fun and positive growth go hand-in-hand.

Programs Offered

The West Des Moines Teen Center offers an after-school drop-in program during the school year for students in grades 7, 8, and 9 in the WDMCSD. The summer program is also open to youth (entering the 6th through 9th grade) outside of the WDMCSD.

Drop-in programs include young women's and men's discussion groups, cooking classes, group games, art and painting workshops, recreational fieldtrips, and community service opportunities. Participants can also gain entrepreneurial experience by helping operate the Snack Shack, a weekly concession stand in which all proceeds go towards program purchases.

Our summer program is open to incoming sixth grade through ninth grade students throughout the Des Moines metro area. Weekly programming runs throughout the months of June, July, and August. Activities include field trips, swimming, bike rides, and arts and crafts.



Hours of Operation

Office Hours: 1 pm to 6 pm, Monday through Friday, during the school year.

After-School Program Hours: The West Des Moines Teen Center is open to participants from 2:30 pm - 6 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and 1:50 pm - 6pm on Wednesday. Some activities, such as off-site field trips, require advance sign up, and pick up times may vary.

Drop-off: Stilwell Junior High students can walk directly to the Teen Center. Indian Hills Junior High students' guardians will need to sign a transportation form allowing them to be bussed to the Teen Center. This form is available in the Indian Hills main office. Valley Southwoods students will need to inform our staff (call 202-5169) that they would like to be picked up after school. A West Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department van, driven by Teen Center staff, will be at Valley Southwoods following dismissal to transport students to the Teen Center.

Pick-Up: Unless a specific event or activity is scheduled to end at a time other than 6 pm, please arrange to have your child walk home or be picked up *no later than* 6 pm. If circumstances will delay your arrival, please call to notify the Teen Center staff members and discuss options to ensure your child's safety. Teen Center staff will close and lock the building promptly at 6 pm.



No-School Days/Holidays: The Teen Center follows the WDMCSD's master calendar. The Teen Center will not operate during the following situations:

- All scheduled school vacation and/or in-service days and/or weeks
- School cancellations or early-outs due to inclement weather
- Summer programming is subject to minimum enrollment requirements.

Attending the Teen Center

Registration: All students who are interested in attending The West Des Moines Teen Center are required to fill out a registration form. Forms can be found at the Teen Center or online at www.wdm.iowa.gov/teencenter. This form includes parent/guardian contact information and medical emergency information, and requires the signature of a parent or guardian. If a signed registration form is not received by the student's third visit, they will be asked to leave.

Fees: Currently, the West Des Moines Teen Center charges a \$50.00 annual fee to register for the after-school program, as well as occasional fee-based programming during the school year. However, all are welcome regardless of ability to pay. The WDM Teen Center offers subsidized fees in accordance with the WDM School District's Free/Reduced Lunch program. Please provide a letter of confirmation for free or reduced lunch from the WDMCSD's Nutrition Department to qualify for a free or reduced Teen Center registration fee. The WDMCSD Nutrition Department can be reached at 633-5088.



Teen Center Identification: Once registered, each student will receive a WDM Teen Center identification card. This card will allow staff to efficiently sign students in and out of the Teen Center and provides a way to track attendance. Students are encouraged to bring their ID to *every visit*; however, a forgotten ID does not prevent a student from attending the Teen Center.

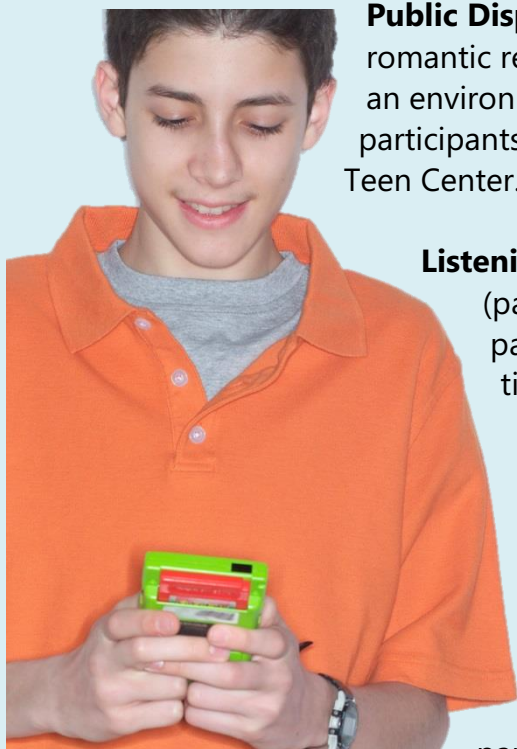
Signing In and Signing Out : When a student arrives at The WDM Teen Center, he/she is required to sign-in at the front door. Signing-in is very important as it informs staff of those students who are on-site. When a participant leaves The WDM Teen Center, whether for a brief time or for the day, he/she is required to sign-out and notify a staff member. Once signed-in, participants may sign-out with a buddy and return after a maximum of 25 minutes. This option is given at the discretion of Teen Center staff.

****Please note:*** *The staff at The WDM Teen Center do their very best to ensure the safety of your child while he/she is in our care. However, when a child signs out, whether for a brief period or for the day, we cannot be responsible for actions or incidents that take place while he/she is off-site.*

Rules and Expectations

The WDM Teen Center is committed to creating a safe, positive environment for all participants. Following is a list of general rules to be enforced during all Teen Center activities and outings.

Behavior: Participants are expected, at all times, to treat staff and peers with respect and consideration. Bickering, teasing and bullying are **strictly** prohibited.



Public Displays of Affection (PDA): We understand that romantic relationships do develop, and our staff strives to create an environment which is comfortable and inclusive for all participants. Therefore, cuddling and kissing are prohibited at the Teen Center.

Listening and Following Directions: For the safety of all (particularly during off-site trips) it is mandatory that participants listen to staff and follow directions at all times.

Language: Participants are to refrain from using inappropriate or derogatory language at the Teen Center. Racial epithets, derogatory names, and intentionally harmful language WILL NOT be tolerated.

Care for the Environment: It is important that participants respect their physical environment at all times. This means: cleaning up after oneself, treating other's belongings with care, and treating all sites (i.e. Teen Center, parks, trails, beaches, museums) with respect.

Vehicles: Off-site field trips require the use of City vehicles that are driven by staff members who have obtained a Chauffeur's License. There is no eating or drinking in any City vehicles, and seat belts must be worn at all times.

****Please note:*** Any rule that is listed in the WDMCSD's student handbook will be enforced at The WDM Teen Center as well.



The West Des Moines Teen

Center Spaces: Participants are not permitted in offices or any room without a staff person present. In addition, the back side of the Teen Center's building (the green space between the building and Grand Avenue) is strictly off limits. Sitting on the pool table (except when taking a shot) and ping pong tables are prohibited. Participants shall not stand or walk on tables, including picnic tables. Participants should also respect our gardens including not walking through them.

Use of Internet: Participant use of the internet is closely monitored by staff. Sites or games that glamorize drugs, tobacco, alcohol, profane language, sex, or violence are prohibited. The following sites are also prohibited: My Space, Facebook, instant-messaging sites, and any site that contains parental advisories. Use of computers is limited to 20 minute blocks; this is to ensure that all participants have a chance to use computers, but also to encourage them to engage with their peers and strengthen social relationships.

Prohibited items: Lighters, matches, energy drinks, excessive sweets, cigarettes, weapons of any kind, drugs, or alcohol

Personal Items: The Teen Center is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damage personal property. Participants who choose to bring personal property to be used at the Teen Center do so at their own risk.

Stealing: Stealing is strictly prohibited. Lockers are provided to ensure the security of personal items. Students need to provide their own combination lock.

Fighting: Participants are strictly prohibited from engaging in any physical altercations.

Discipline Policy

Violation of the aforementioned rules will result in the following consequences:

1) 1st Offense: The participant will be warned by a staff member that they have broken a rule. If the offending behavior is not rectified, a Strike (written reprimand) will be issued. A parent/guardian will be notified by phone of the Strike. The student will be required to leave the Teen Center for the rest of the day.

2) 2nd Offense: The participant will be warned by a staff member that they have broken a rule. Again, if the offending behavior is not rectified, a second Strike will be given. A parent/guardian will be notified by phone, and the participant will be asked to leave for the day. The second Strike will result in the student's removal from the Teen Center for 5 school days.

3) 3rd Offense: When a third Strike is issued, a parent/guardian will be notified at once and the participant will be required to leave. Once a third Strike is issued, the participant loses Teen Center privileges for the remainder of the school year. All registration fees will be forfeited if a participant receives a third Strike.



Please Note: *Strikes are issued at the discretion of Teen Center staff. Every effort is made to treat all Teen Center participants equitably. Teen Center staff members develop unique relationships with each participant and strive to work with each individual to resolve issues with integrity and in a way that builds character and self-esteem. Dialogue among staff, parents/guardians, and students is always welcome and encouraged and is especially crucial when a discipline issue arises.

Confidentiality

All employees, interns, volunteers, and participants of The WDM Teen Center, who have access to identifying or other personal information, adhere to strict confidentiality standards guided by state and federal law. Except as required by law, confidential information about a participant will only be released with written permission via a signed release form. If released, information will be given to the requesting party only on a need to know basis. Exceptions to these standards are listed below:

- Staff, interns and volunteers are ethically and legally obligated to protect the physical safety of participants and the community. If it is suspected that a participant is a danger to him/herself or others, confidentiality may be suspended to protect those at risk.
- Staff, interns and volunteers are ethically and legally obligated to report the suspected neglect, physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse of a minor, adult or elderly person. Any such suspicion must be reported to the Teen Center Coordinator, information must be documented, and appropriate action will be taken. If a participant informs a staff member of an abusive situation, a report will be made to the West Des Moines Police Department.
- Under certain circumstances, a court of law may order records and/or testimony from staff members who have worked with a participant or family (if they are involved in a legal proceeding).
- A staff, intern, or volunteer may consult routinely with a supervisor and/or community professional about a specific situation regarding a youth or family. The intention is to provide both youth and family with the best possible service or interventions within a network of community partners.

Additional Policies and Procedures

Medication: If a participant requires prescription medication, we strongly encourage its use while attending the WDM Teen Center. Staff members are not allowed to hold or administer medication. If a participant has a prescription for a metered dose inhaler (for asthma) or an epi-pen (for allergic reactions) **they will be required to carry these medications with them at all times during their attendance at The West Des Moines Teen Center.** Failure to bring a necessary prescription, inhaler or epi-pen will mean that the participant cannot attend The West Des Moines Teen Center's activities. All medications must be in their original containers with the original label still attached.

Lost and Found: The WDM Teen Center is not responsible for items that may be left behind. Found valuables, such as cell-phones or iPods, will be held by the WDM Teen Center's Program Directors. If items are not claimed within four weeks, they may be given to a charity.

Communications with Parents and Guardians: The WDM Teen Center believes strongly in maintaining frequent communications with families of participants. This may include one-on-one discussions or a discussion with a participant and their



parent/guardian- especially when special acknowledgements or concerns are noted. Contact will be made with a parent/guardian through phone calls, letters, email, or face-to-face requests. Although careful discretion will be used, staff will contact parents/guardians at home or work when necessary. These communications are not intended as an inconvenience but to support participants in our efforts to guide their positive development.

Parent and Guardian Feedback and Communications: Parents and guardians are always welcome to initiate communications with Teen Center staff members for any reason. We welcome your feedback, ideas, and constructive criticism. *If a parent or guardian needs to communicate specific instructions about rules, behaviors, or regulations related to their child's participation at The West Des Moines Teen Center, we ask that these communications are submitted in writing.*

School Absence: If a youth is absent from school for any reason, they may not attend The West Des Moines Teen Center on that day.

Contact Information

Address: Rex Mathes Building @ 1401 Vine Street, West Des Moines

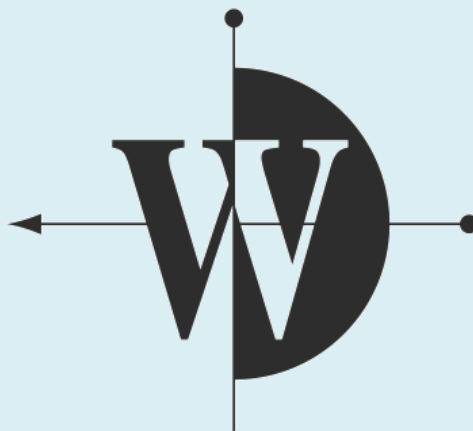
Mailing Address: 4200 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50265

Phone: 515-202-5169 (1-6pm)

Email: wdmteencenter@yahoo.com

Recreation/Teen Center Coordinator: Allison Ullestad
515-222-3455, allison.ullestad@wdm.iowa.gov

Recreation Superintendent: Greg Hansen
515-222-3448, greg.hansen@wdm.iowa.gov



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